

JAMES 1:5-27

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to James chapter 1 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

Last week we covered the first four verses of James chapter 1 and tonight we will finish looking at this chapter that deals with: ***THE BELIEVER AND SUFFERING***.

Keep in mind that James is writing to Jewish believers who had to flee the land of Israel because of the persecution they were facing from their fellow non-believing Jews. (Acts 8:1, 11:19)

Thus, James opens up by trying to encourage them as they go through various trials in their life. He wants them to have a correct perspective because once they do, once we do, we can count it all joy knowing that God is working in us for good, to make us complete, not to destroy us!

But how can we handle these situations?

How do we know what to do?

How do we know which direction God wants us to go in these trials?

James is going to tell us as we read through these verses here in James chapter 1 this evening.

Remember what Job said as he spoke to his so-called friends and counselors, one's who gave him foolish advice. He said to them in Job 28:12-22, **“But where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? Man does not know its value, Nor is it found in the land of the living. The deep says, ‘It is not in me’; And the sea says, ‘It is not with me.’ It cannot be purchased for gold, Nor can silver be weighed for its price. It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, In precious onyx or sapphire. Neither gold nor crystal can equal it, Nor can it be exchanged for jewelry of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral or quartz, For the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it, Nor can it be valued in pure gold. From where then does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding? It is hidden from the eyes of all living, And concealed from the birds of the air. Destruction and Death say, ‘We have heard a report about it with our ears.’”**

James is going to answer that question for us this evening and like Job said, **“God understands its way, And He knows its place. For He looks to the ends of the earth, And sees under the whole heavens, To establish a weight for the wind, And apportion the waters by measure. When He made a law for the rain, And a path for the thunderbolt, Then He saw wisdom and declared it; He prepared it, indeed, He searched it out. And to man He said, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, And to depart from evil is understanding.’”** Job 28:23-28.

We too will see that the Lord has the wisdom we need for every situation we are going through! But it is not easy and the reason it is not easy is because if it were easy, we would not need God. We would not seek His direction, we would just do what we think is right.

But, because life is tough, difficulties come our way, we need to look to Him, we need to surrender our life to Him and trust that He will see us through the valley of the shadow of death and bring us to the mountaintop for a time of refreshing, and then we will go back to the valley of the shadow of death for me learning, trusting in the Lord!

And, like I have said, it is not easy. One writer put it like this. He wrote,

An unknown author of another century wrote this timeless poem:

*My life is but a weaving,
 Between my Lord and me;
 I cannot choose the colours.
 He worketh steadily.
 Oftimes He weaveth sorrow
 And I in foolish pride,
 Forget He sees the upper
 And I the under side.
 Not till the loom is silent
 And the shuttles cease to fly,
 Shall God unroll the canvas
 And explain the reason why,
 The dark threads are as needful
 In the Weaver's skill hand,
 As threads of gold and silver,
 In the pattern He has planned.*

The old poem correctly expresses the truth that in this life we will never fully understand the particular blending of joys and woes in our lives because we see only the underside of the tapestry. Only when death stills the loom and we stand before God will he turn the canvas over and allow us, to our eternal delight, to see what he has done.

However, we must not think we cannot understand anything of what God is doing, or that the mixture of trials and joys in our lives is totally inscrutable, [unknowable] for it is not so. In James' opening words (vv. 1-4) he informs the suffering church that testing develops perseverance (spiritual fortitude), and that as they tough it out they will develop a dynamic maturity, becoming "mature and complete, not lacking anything" (v. 4b). We can understand something of the process, and this is why he has called the suffering church to "consider it pure joy" (v. 1a).

The problem immediately apparent to any who have experienced the various trials of life is that while you are in the midst of them, it is hard to understand what is going on and to believe it is for your benefit.

It is easy to be the wise pastor assuring the hurting that they are being matured and to "hang tough." But it is another thing when I am the one being tested! It's much easier to say to someone else, "Consider it pure joy . . . whenever you face trials of many kinds" than to joyfully embrace my own *angst* [sorrow].

James, who was no armchair general, understood this, and in the closely connected verses which follow (5-8), he instructs those who are suffering on how to get the wisdom necessary to plow victoriously through life's many trials. James, brother of one whose life was filled with trials and who died at the hands of murderers, is telling us how to lasso the bucking, uncontrollable trials of life and ride them to wisdom and triumphant spirituality. What he says ought to command our undivided attention.

- R. Kent Hughes, James – Faith That Works, pp. 25-26

So it is important to know that we will go through tough times and when we do we should count it all joy because during those times God is working in us so that He can work through us.

With that said, let's begin reading in James chapter 1, starting in verse 5 and let's see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study His Word and we continue looking at *The Believer and Suffering*.

JAMES 1

VERSES 5-8

Please understand that *knowledge* and *wisdom* are not the same thing.

Knowledge is information, and let's think of this information as the truths of God from the Word of God. That is important to know and James is coming at this with the idea that these believers already know the truths of God.

James is not speaking of knowledge here but wisdom, which is applying the correct information to our lives, how we are to walk in a given situation.

Think of it like this.

Knowledge is like what we read on the package of cigarettes. It says that cigarettes "*Can cause heart disease*" or they "*Can cause lung cancer.*" You get the idea. That is the information.

Now wisdom is that you don't smoke cigarettes because it can cause these things. It is the application of the information or knowledge that you have. That is what James is speaking of here with wisdom!

One writer put it like this. He wrote, *“The Bible does not give specific answers to the innumerable problems that arise in life. It does not solve problems in so many words, but God’s word does give us general principles. We must apply these principles to problems as they arise day by day. That is why we need wisdom. Spiritual wisdom is the practical application of our Lord’s teachings to everyday situations.”* How true that is!

Now, as we find ourselves in various trials, various situations, God wants us to seek Him for wisdom, He wants to give us the wisdom we need to walk accordingly. He is not hiding it from us or keeping it from us.

And here’s the thing. And many don’t like this, or they may not agree with it, but it is true.

If you want wisdom, go to the Word of God, the Bible, that is where you need to start.

The place to end, well, that is also the Bible.

You see, God is not going to deviate from His Word and thus true wisdom will always be consistent with God’s Word, we just need to apply it to our lives!

Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 7:7-11, **“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!”**

Just ask and then walk accordingly!

The problem today is we go to so many different things and we leave God out, we negate His Word for what we are going through and then we wonder why we don't understand why this is happening to us or what we should do about it.

Spurgeon put it like this, and it still applies today. He wrote, *“We are all so ready to go to books, to go to men, to go to ceremonies, to anything except to God. . . . Consequently, the text does not say, ‘Let him ask books,’ nor ‘ask priests,’ but, ‘let him ask of God.’”*

And here is the problem today. We ask God for wisdom and then we doubt what God's Word says, we don't believe it is true.

In a sense this person is double-minded, and he is unstable.

John Bunyan in his classic allegory, *Pilgrim's Progress* called this person *“Mister facing both ways.”*

Yes, it is physically impossible to do and it is spiritually impossible to do, and yet many try!

You know this person, everything is a crisis, he is tossed to and fro as he goes through various trials and Jesus says that this person will not receive from Him because he is double-minded, he lacks faith.

You see, God is looking for people who seek wisdom from His Word and thus, they must believe the Scriptures are from God and they speak to us today!

Make no mistake about it, the Christian life is one of walking in faith.

When we were saved, we believed by faith in the promises of God. We believed that by His atoning work on the cross of Calvary our sins were paid in full and by asking Him to be Lord and Savior of our lives we are saved.

And then, when trials come our way, we don't understand, we don't believe that God is still working in us, dealing with us.

You see, as we go through various trials, we need to ask for wisdom in faith, not doubting God's Word or His ability to give us wisdom.

Here is the problem. If you doubt God's Word, if you don't trust God, then your actions will reflect that attitude and your life will not be better, it will be worse!

Turn to Proverbs chapter 2 and listen to what Solomon has to say regarding Wisdom starting in verse 1.

We are told, **“My son, if you receive my words, And treasure my commands within you, So that you incline your ear to wisdom, And apply your heart to understanding; Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding, If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; He guards the paths of justice, And preserves the way of His saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice, Equity and every good path. When wisdom enters your heart, And knowledge is pleasant to your soul, Discretion will preserve you; Understanding will keep you, To deliver you from the way of evil, From the man who speaks perverse things, From those who leave the paths of uprightness To walk in the ways of darkness; Who rejoice in doing evil, And delight in the perversity of the wicked; Whose ways are crooked, And who are devious in their paths; To deliver you from the immoral woman, From the seductress who flatters with her words, Who forsakes the companion of her youth, And forgets the covenant of her God. For her house leads down to**

death, And her paths to the dead; None who go to her return, Nor do they regain the paths of life - So you may walk in the way of goodness, And keep to the paths of righteousness.”

Proverbs 2:1-20.

Very wise words to listen and apply to our lives!

What we often try to do is we lean on our own understanding of things and we get all messed up. God knows all things, and thus, if He knows all things, He knows exactly what I need in my life and He understands what I am going through. Thus, He can give me the wisdom to walk in faith, to trust in Him no matter what comes upon my life. We don't know all things and thus, if we do what we want, we will just cause more problems in our life!

That is what we are told in Proverbs 3:5-6, **“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.”**

He wants to guide us, direct us, but to do that we need to surrender to Him and follow Him instead of following what we think is right! Don't be **“double-minded”** but focus on the Lord and **“He shall direct your paths.”**

VERSES 9-11

Isn't it interesting to see what the world glories in and what God glories in.

You see, it doesn't matter if you are rich or poor, in God's eyes we are on equal ground. We don't glory in earthly riches but eternal riches that are ours in Christ!

One writer put it like this, *“As the poor brother forgets all his earthly poverty, so the rich brother forgets all his earthly riches. By faith in Christ the two are equals.”* (Hiebert, citing Lenski)

From there James speaks of the flower perishing and in the springtime in Israel the land is full of flowers. But, only for a short time before they wither away.

How often people place all their time and energy on that which is temporary, that which passes away quickly!

Solomon did that, he sought everything under the sun and apart from God. He had riches, all kinds of things. And yet, he was empty inside. It was all vanity and yet, look at people today who are going after what Solomon went after and they are not finding the satisfaction that they are looking for.

You see, Solomon was not satisfied until he returned to the Lord for that is where true joy, true satisfaction is found.

Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 16:26, **“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”**

Also, in Jeremiah 9:23-24 we are told, **“Thus says the LORD: ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,’ says the LORD.”**

That is what Solomon found out and it is what we need to remember.

Also, keep in mind that trials will come on the rich and the poor, that is not the issue. What matters is how you walk in them – walk in the wisdom of the Lord! And, if you lack wisdom, ask of God, as James has told us!

VERSE 12

As you read this it sounds like one of the Beatitudes that Jesus spoke as He gave His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5 – 7.

And James uses the same Greek word for “**blessed**” or MAKARIOS, (mak-ar’-ee-os). This word speaks of more than just being happy, having a carefree life. It speaks of an inner joy and satisfaction even in the midst of various trials because that joy is found in the Lord and not the ever-changing circumstances of life!

And that should just make sense because that is what James has been speaking of. Remember what he wrote, “**My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.**” James 1:3-4.

Here’s the thing. As trials come our way, they can’t destroy our faith, but God’s desire is to strengthen it, to make us complete.

And in the end, as we go to be with Him, He will give us the crown of life, not a kingly crown but a *STEPHANOS* in the Greek, or a victor’s crown!

You see, true love for God will endure all kinds of hardships, it will endure till the end!

It is as Jesus said in John 15:9-11, “**As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.**”

Folks, we can enjoy the fullness of life, that abundant life now in Christ and one day with Him in glory!

But notice that abundant life is manifested in our love towards each other, not apart!

And remember what Jesus said in Revelation 22:12-13, “**And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.**”

VERSES 13-16

Now this seems to contradict what we just read, so what is James trying to tell us here?

Last week we dealt with this briefly but again, it is important for us to understand the difference of what God does and what Satan does.

Back in verse 12 I believe James is speaking of trials or tests, but here in verses 13 and 14 he is speaking of temptation.

How do I know that is true? Let me explain.

The words “**trials**” and “**temptations**” come from the same Greek word, PEIRASMOS, (pi-ras-mos’).

Thus, when we read of situations that will strengthen us, help us to grow, mature us, they are from God and they are trials to test our faith.

On the other hand, Satan will come along to tempt us, to exploit the trial we are going through so we might sin.

God wants to build us up – and He uses trials to do that.

Satan wants to destroy us – and he uses temptations to do that.

It can be the same situation; it just depends on how we respond to it!

Think about Job and all that he went through. Satan was tempting Job to sin and God was using that same situation to test Job’s faith!

Now, like Adam and Eve, we like to blame everyone and anyone for our sin, even God!

But notice what James is telling us here. It is impossible for God to tempt you; it is a foreign concept to God.

Now, I have heard people say who are living in an adulterous relationship, ***“God has brought us together!”***

That is not true, the Devil tempted you and you took his bait and got hooked.

Also, you can't blame the Devil, he didn't force you, it was your choice!

Listen to what J. Vernon McGee had to say about this. He wrote,

Man is always ready to shift responsibility for his sins. If he cannot blame God, he will adopt an approach of modern psychology by saying that sin is a sickness. In this way he hopes to escape judgment.

But sin is not a sickness; it is a moral failure for which man must give account.

Some even try to blame inanimate things for sin. But material “things” are not sinful in themselves. Sin does not originate there. James tracks the lion to its den when he says: “Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.”

Sin comes from within us, from our old, evil, fallen, unregenerate nature. Jesus said, “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Matt. 15:19).

- J. Vernon McGee

Now when James says **“drawn away”** in James 1:14 it comes from the Greek word EXELKO, (ex-el'-ko) and it was often used as a hunting term that spoke of a baited trap that was used as a lure to capture an unsuspecting animal.

The word “**enticed**” is the Greek word DELEAZO, (del-eh-ad’-zo) and it was used as a fishing term to refer to bait, to bait a hook!

That is Satan’s plan, to deceive us into thinking that sin is good, and we take a bite.

You see, we are drawn away by our own fleshly desires and as we begin to think about sin, fantasize about it, the end result is that sin is birthed in our lives and sin will bring about death!

And this is a battle as James tells us, “**But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.**” James 1:14-15.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his book, *Temptation*, explains it like this. He wrote,

With irresistible power desire seizes mastery over the flesh. . . . It makes no difference whether it is sexual desire, or ambition, or vanity, or desire for revenge, or love of fame and power, or greed for money. . . . Joy in God is . . . extinguished in us and we seek all our joy in the creature.

At this moment God is quite unreal to us, he loses all reality, and only desire for the creature is real; . . . Satan does not here fill us with hatred of God, but with forgetfulness of God. . . . The lust thus aroused envelops the mind and will of man in the deepest darkness. The powers of clear discrimination and of decision are taken from us.

The questions present themselves: “Is what the flesh desires really sin in this case?” “Is it really not permitted to me, yes – expected of me, now, here, in my particular situation, to appease desire?” . . . It is here everything within me rises up against the Word of God.

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Temptation*, p. 33

How true that is. It is as Jeremiah 17:9-10 says, **“The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.”**

Folks, sin is not a sickness, we can't blame God for it, but it comes from our own evil heart if we give into temptation!

This is so simplistic and yet Satan uses it with tremendous success. He convinces us that in pursuing our corrupt desires it will produce in us life and goodness, satisfaction, and we take the bait!

Remember what Jesus said of Satan and then what He has to offer us in John 10:10, **“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”**

Don't listen to the lies of the Devil, don't let temptation give birth to sin in your life but find that abundant life in Christ for all He has for us is good!

How do I know that what God has for me is good?

Read on and listen to what James is telling us!

VERSES 17-18

This phrase, **“Father of lights”** was an ancient Jewish title for God and it spoke of Him being the Creator, the giver of light!

And thus, from God all that is good is given. And please note that God's goodness is consistent, there is no variation to it.

One scholar put it this way, *“Unlike those sources of light, which, magnificent as they are, can nevertheless vary and will eventually fade, God’s character, power, wisdom, and love have no variation or shifting shadow. Through Malachi the Lord declares, “I, the Lord, do not change” (Mal. 3:6); through John, we are told that “God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5); and through the writer of Hebrews we are assured that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever.”*

Again, as we just read, John tells us, **“This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.”** I John 1:5.

So when God tells us something we don’t need to fear that something evil will come of it. It is not possible for God to bring evil, not at all.

So, how do I know if something is from God or not?

First of all, does it align with what God has said in His Word?

Secondly, how does it fit in on the eternal scale?

You see, not everything that seems good is good. Is it helping me to grow, to mature or does it puff me up?

Take it to God, ask for wisdom, He wants to give it to you!

I like the perspective that John MacArthur has on this subject as he said, *“The implication of this passage is this: When we, as God’s children, are so abundantly and continually showered with the most gracious, valuable, and satisfying blessings our heavenly father can bestow, why should anything evil have the slightest attraction to us?”*

Now listen carefully to what James is saying regarding the goodness of God.

He has saved us by His own will, it is His desire and He did so by the Word of Truth or by the Scriptures.

Peter makes that point in I Peter 1:23-25 as he said, **“having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because ‘All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, But the word of the LORD endures forever.’ Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.”**

Thus, never be afraid to share the Scriptures for they are the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes!

Now, after James talks about God being the Source of the original creation, he then talks about how He *spoke* another creation into existence, His new creation.

And that is you and me, believers!

We see that spoken of in II Corinthians 5:17, **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”**

Also, in Galatians 6:15 Paul wrote, **“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.”**

And in II Corinthians 4:1-6 we are told, **“Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”**

And thus, the firstfruits that James is speaking of here, I believe, are believers who will be gathered together during His harvest, the Lord will gather us together to be with Him!

Now, since we are a new creation in Christ, how should that be manifested in our lives, what should people see?

James is going to expound on that next. Listen to what he has to say.

VERSES 19-20

What is the natural response when we face difficult times?

We don’t listen, we lash out at people, we pour out our wrath on them giving them what we think they deserve.

God tells us to slow down, to listen to His voice, to His direction because as you do the words that flow from your mouth will be words that bring forth life and not destruction!

Remember, you are a new creation in Christ and those old things, those old ways have passed away, don't bring them back!

I like the way that J. A. Motyer put it as he wrote, *“We might wonder why the ever-practical James does not proceed to outline schemes of daily Bible reading or the like, for surely these are the ways in which we offer a willing ear to the voice of God. But he does not help us in this way. Rather, he goes deeper, for there is little point in schemes and times if we have not got an attentive spirit. It is possible to be unfailing regular in Bible reading, but to achieve no more than to have moved the book-mark forward: this is reading unrelated to an attentive spirit. The word is read but not heard. On the other hand, if we can develop an attentive spirit, this will spur us to create those conditions – a proper method in Bible-reading, a discipline of time, and so on – by which the spirit will find itself satisfied in hearing the Word of God.”*

Also, as Epictetus once said, *“Nature has given to man one tongue, but two ears, that we may hear from others twice as much as we speak.”*

That is a good idea!

But listen to what Solomon said in Proverbs 10:19, **“In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise.”**

In Proverbs 13:3 we are told, **“He who guards his mouth preserves his life, But he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.”**

And in Proverbs 16:32 we are told, **“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.”**

Very wise words we need to apply to our lives.

First, listen to what God is telling you and then listen to what God is telling you through others, you can learn a lot about yourself that way!

William MacDonald put it like this as he wrote, *“A man who is quick-tempered does not produce the kind of righteousness which God expects from His children [once again maturity is in view]. Those who lose their temper give people a wrong impression about Christianity. It is still true that ‘he who is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city’ (Prov. 16:32).”*

And James is not done speaking about those characteristics that should flow from our lives since we are a new creation in Christ.

Listen to what he says next.

VERSE 21

Don’t listen to the lies of the Devil but put aside, cast off the filthiness by letting God’s Word bring you to saving faith and then keep you clean or sanctify you as you walk with Him.

You see, the purity of God’s Word will preserve us in an evil world.

David put it this way in Psalm 119:9-11, **“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your Commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.”**

Fill yourself up with the things of God and not the garbage of this world and what will flow from your life will be that which is good, that which is perfect!

VERSES 22-25

Keep in mind that in the ancient world many loved to hear what a teacher had to say, they loved information.

But that is all meaningless if you don't apply to your life what you hear.

You see, if you heard a teacher and followed his ways you would be called a disciple.

That is what God wants us to be, disciples, not just hearers of His Word but doers!

It is as Jesus said in Matthew 7:24-27, **“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”**

Let me put it like this in regard to hearing the Word of God. If you come to the church and you leave as you came in, you missed the whole point.

You see, God is teaching you, showing you areas in your life that need to be changed. Now you can listen and change, or you can listen and leave unchanged. It is up to you, but don't miss out on what God wants to do.

I think this is obvious but a person who is only a hearer of God's Word and not a doer will look at himself briefly, not carefully in the mirror and say, ***“Looking good!”***

The reality is, when compared to the holiness of God, he is a miserable sinner and he refuses to see it.

Yes, he may know the truths of God, have the head knowledge, but he is not applying it to his life so it can be manifested in his actions!

We are to allow God's Word to remind us who we are, sinners saved by grace and apart from God we can do nothing.

We are not to just admire the image we see but allow God's Word to cause us to do something about it, to be conformed to His image not ours!

What good is a mirror if you see that there is some broccoli between your teeth and then do nothing about it?

You see, it is of no value and the same is true with God's Word, if you don't do what God is calling you to do, then it is of no value to you!

William MacDonald put it like this, *"To [the serious, mature Christian] . . . the Bible is the perfect law of liberty. Its precepts are not burdensome. They tell him to do exactly what his new nature loves to do. As he obeys, he finds true freedom from human traditions and carnal reasonings. The truth makes him free. This is the man who benefits from the Bible. He does not forget what he has read. Rather he seeks to live it out in daily practice. His simple childlike obedience brings incalculable blessing to his soul. This one will be blessed in what he does."*

Now that phrase "**looks into**" means "*to stoop down*" in order to have a good look, to look intently into, not just a casual glance!

As we study God's Word we are to apply it to our lives and it is not just a quick glance and then we move on, but we search the Scriptures and let them affect our lives by the power of God's Spirit!

It is as the Lord said to Joshua in Joshua 1:8, **“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”**

I think that is clear enough. Be in God’s Word, meditate upon it, and observe it to do it or obey what God is saying and you will be blessed!

There is another point that is important and that is as we look into the mirror of God’s Word, we see Jesus.

One writer put it like this, *“In His classic allegory Pilgrim’s Progress, Puritan preacher and writer John Bunyan describes the magnificent mirror that the Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains showed to Christiana and Mercy: ‘Now the glass was one of a thousand. It would present a man, one way with his own features exactly; and turn it but another way, and it would show one the very face and similitude of the Prince of pilgrims Himself. Yea, I have talked with those that can tell, and have said they have seen the very crown of thorns upon His head by looking into this glass; they have therein also seen the holes in His hands, in His feet, and His side. The man who continues looking into the mirror of God’s Word sees in it things far more wonderful than his own face. He sees not only his filthy garments, not only the spots and stains on his life; he sees in it Christ, the Christ of the thorn-crowned brow, the Christ of the Cross, his Saviour, whose blood cleanses him from all sin.’ Bunyan’s point is that, when a person honestly and humbly looks into the Word of God, he will see two things - his own sin and the sinless Savior and Lord. When such a person sees and responds to Christ and then lives out the Word he is blessed in the doing.”* (John MacArthur)

VERSES 26-27

What we see here is that James gives to us examples of what it means to be a doer of the Word, how we live out our faith.

You see, religion is not shown by hearing the Word of God, but by doing it and doing it with a right heart!

James starts out with controlling the tongue and he will deal with that much more in chapter 3 and so will we.

But if you can't control your tongue then your faith is empty, it does not translate into the way you live, the way you treat others.

Think about this for a minute. It has been estimated that the average person will speak some 18,000 words in a day, enough for a fifty-four-page book.

In a year that amounts to sixty-six 800-page volumes!

Up to one-fifth of the average person's life is spent talking!

Okay, I bring the average up, but think about that! No wonder it is so hard to control the tongue, we are always talking!

May we be slow to speak and quick to hear what God is saying to us!

Also, if you are walking with God you will desire to help those in need.

“But what about me?”

The focus is not self, but others and I know this for a fact because I have experienced this in my own life.

The more I am exhausted, and I have to then minister to someone, if I am obedient, the Lord takes care of the rest. If I am not, I am even more tired!

You see, James is not speaking of religious rituals here, but a right kind of living. If God is on the throne of your life, if His Spirit is guiding you, then you will have the nature of Jesus flow through your life!

As I close this evening let me encourage you to keep yourself unspotted from the world.

Lot is an example of a person who didn't keep himself unspotted. He saw the beauty of Sodom and he coveted the land of Sodom and then he took it for himself and yet we are told in Genesis 13:13, "**But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD.**"

That is where Lot had placed himself and his family!

And the progression of Lot is seen as he saw Sodom, he pitched his tent towards Sodom and before long he was sitting at the gate of Sodom, an elder of the city.

Peter tells us of this man Lot in II Peter 2:7-8, "**and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds).**"

The Amplified Bible puts these verses like this, "**And He rescued righteous Lot, greatly worn out and distressed by the wanton ways of the ungodly and lawless - [Gen 19:16,29.] For that just man, living [there] among them, tortured his righteous soul every day with what he saw and heard of [their] unlawful and wicked deeds.**"

The end result is that Lot lost everything and was saved as the angels had to drag him out of the city before the Lord brought His judgment upon Sodom and the surrounding cities for their wickedness.

Lot lived such a contradictory lifestyle that when he tried to tell his son's in law of the coming judgment of God, they laughed at him and mocked him, and they were destroyed in the judgment!

God desires us to be obedient to His Word and that is then reflected in our actions, the things that we do. God desires to give us good gifts from above, don't settle on the evil that is from below.

Let the Word of God enlighten by the Spirit of God cause us to walk accordingly!

And I will close with this, I promise.

“There is no book with so lofty an ideal of what life may become when it is yielded to the grace of Christ. A cleansed heart, and an unspotted robe; no sin allowed and permitted in the soul, and no evil habit allowed to dominate and enthrall the life.” (Meyer)